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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the problems arising from the use of the mother tongue in education in Nigeria and the solutions that are being attempted. It is an extension of an earlier comprehensive review of the mother tongue as a means of promoting equal access to education. To outline the problems involved, the various bodies and institutions involved in the use of the mother tongue in education are discussed. Problems facing the states include: (1) lack of qualified teachers of the mother tongue; (2) poor development and uncoordinated efforts at development; (3) the low status of the languages and the lack of literature aimed at sufficiency and adequacy of the languages as media of instruction; (4) need for revision and updating of orthographies; (5) avoidance by the mass media of scientific and technical themes when using Nigerian language; (6) negative attitudes of parents; (7) the high status of English generally and in education; and (8) the transfer from the mother tongue to English as a medium of instruction. It is concluded that the main problem is language policy, the sufficiency of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, and teacher training. (SW)

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LINGUISTIC DOCUMENTATION FOR

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

CASES, PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS

THE MOTHER TONGUE AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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by

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Abstract

The present study is an extension of an earlier study in which a comprehensive review was made of the mother tongue as a means of promoting equal access to education in Nigeria. It deals mainly with the problems arising from the use of the mother tongue in education and the solutions which are being attempted.

The language policy of a community is basic to the development of the mother tongue in education. When Tanzania adopted Kiswahili as the lingua franca, Kiswahili got a boost. Kiswahili is reputed to be a second mother tongue of Tanzanians. In the African countries where English is the lingua franca and the medium of instruction in the schools, the mother tongues have little incentive for development for use in education. In Nigeria, there is a national policy, which favours the development of the mother tongue. However, practice varies from State to State and within a State. This freedom of practice and the issue of making a Nigerian language or even an African language the lingua franca affect adversely the development of the mother tongue in education and as a means of promoting equal access to education.

In the second chapter, the problems are outlined, using as a base the various bodies and institutions which are involved in the use of the mother tongue in education. The problems facing the States are lack of qualified teachers of the mother tongue, which is due to the lack of incentives for learning or specializing in the language; feeble development and unco-ordinated efforts at development; the low status of the languages and the lack of literature aimed at sufficiency and adequacy of the languages as media of instruction; orthographies needing revision and up-dating; the mass media avoiding scientific and technical themes when using Nigerian languages; parental negative attitude; the high status of English generally and in education; the transfer from the mother tongue to English as a medium of instruction.

The efforts of certain bodies and institutions are discussed next. These organizations are the National Language Centre (Lagos), the Centre for Nigerian Languages (Kano), the University of Ife Institute of Education, the In-Service Centre of Kano Ministry of Education, the Nigerian universities, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction (ICMI), the Centre for Educational Development Overseas (CEDO), the Commonwealth Association of Science and Mathematics Educators (CASME), individual researchers and authors.

The third chapter is a summary of the problems, solutions and recommendations. The concluding remarks narrow down the problems to language policy, sufficiency of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction and teacher training. The reality of English in Nigerian education need not detract from the importance of the mother tongue as a means of promoting equal access to education Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION - POLICY AND PRINCIPLES

This study is an extension of an earlier study on "The Mother Tongue as a Means of Promoting Equal Access to Education in Nigeria" (Unesco ED/WS/307, Paris, 8 June 1972). It deals mainly with the problems which arise in the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction and the solutions which are being attempted. An effort is made to keep the study self-contained as far as possible.

The language policy is a starting point in any study of the use of the mother tongue in education. When Tanzania decided in 1967 that Kiswahili become its lingua franca and therefore the language of the schools, Kiswahili received every encouragement for development. Kiswahili is reputed to be practically a second mother tongue of the Tanzanians.(1) G.R.V. Mmari tells us "Kiswahili is the lingua franca, the language of government business, and is increasingly becoming the medium of instruction of the school system. It is already the medium of instruction throughout the primary-school system (with an exception of a few English-medium schools for the foreign element in the country) and in most of the colleges of national education (the notable exception being the diploma-granting colleges).". He continues "Mass media use both languages, although Kiswahili dominates the media. There are newspapers in both languages and the radio broadcasts in both languages (English is used mainly on foreign broadcasts)".(2) On the other hand, in those African communities in which English is the lingua franca and the medium of instruction in the schools, the African mother tongues have little incentive for development as vehicles of education.

In Nigeria, the policy remains as it was in 1971 - "the Nigerian primary-school child should be well grounded in his/her mother tongue apart from learning English and/or any other language as a second or third language".(3) But there have been two or three incidents which are bound to have some effect on the policy. The first was the concern about the lack of an indigenous lingua franca expressed by the Public Service Review Commission, popularly known as the Udoji Commission:

> "An overriding problem, which affects the public service as it does all aspects of society, is that of language. Nigeria shares with many developing, and some developed countries, the lack of an indigenous lingua franca. What this means for efficiency in the conduct of government and business is rarely even thought about perhaps because there seems to be no immediate answer. But it is perfectly clear to the careful observer that below the top-most levels in the various sectors of society most people are conducting their business in a language which, in varying degrees, they have not in fact mastered. We are no wiser than any one else in offering solutions to this problem for the public service, except to call for understanding on the part of superiors of the fact that if they want their instructions understood, they must apply patience and understanding of the exceptional problems of communication in this kind of linguistic dilemma and to call for vastly expanded research in all aspects of linguistic science with a view to developing a national lingua franca.".(4)

The Government reacted by underlining the three major languages in the country - Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo:

> "The Government is fully aware that the trend the world over is to have a national language which is a means of preserving the people's culture. Although the adoption of a lingua franca in Nigeria is a task which cannot be achieved overnight, Government is of the view that a beginning should

be made as soon as possible and considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages in Nigeria other than his own vernacular.".(5)

A second incident was the decision by the Federal Ministry of Education to sponsor the preparation of books and materials in Edo, Efik, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulfulde and Kanuri for the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme which is due to start in September 1976.(6) Such decisions usually spark off controversies and debates and may lead to a State impetus to develop other mother tongues. It may be noted that the national broadcasts of news are made in the above seven languages and Tiv and Ijaw, both of which are spoken by larger communities than Edo and Efik.

The next incident was the establishment by the Federal Ministry of Education of a National Language Centre (at 6 Obanta Road, Apapa, Lagos). The Centre takes the position that "for education to be meaningful, the child should be taught in his mother tongue which he can both read and write". Since all the Nigerian languages cannot feasibly be developed, the Centre advises "the setting up of a list of minority languages that should be used in the educational programme".(7) One may infer that a number of Nigerian languages will receive encouragement and possibly financial support for their development.

The University of Ife experiment of using Yoruba as the medium of instruction throughout the primary school is still going on. It was aimed at influencing the policy and practice of the medium of instruction in the primary school. The attitude of the Ministry of Education, Western Nigeria, where the programme is being run, was reported in the "Daily Sketch" of 7 November 1973:

> "The West Ministry of Education has explained that the use of the Yoruba language as a medium of instruction in some selected primary schools in the State was only an experiment and that there had been no official decision on the language being used as a medium of instruction in all primary schools.
>
> In a release issued in Ibadan yesterday, the Ministry referred to recent press comments on the subject and stated that the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction in schools was widely recognized and practised in educational institutions in Nigeria.
>
> English language, the release continued, was often supplemented with indigenous language, even in upper classes where the teacher felt that it would aid the pupils' understanding.
>
> The Ministry also recalled the recent recommendations at the seminar on national education policy by the various State governments in Nigeria to use indigenous language for instruction in the early stages in primary schools, adding that 'there is absolutely nothing in the country's educational system which prevents a school from using any language for instruction'.
>
> The release further pointed out that in order to test the validity of the effectiveness of using indigenous language for instruction, and examine associated problems, the University of Ife started an experiment in one school in the State in 1970 and this was done with the full consent freely and voluntarily given by participants and their parents and the co-operation of the Ministry.
>
> Encouraged by the initial success of the experiment and in order that the results may have wider applicability, the University of Ife extended the experiment to a few more schools.

The experiment, which will be under close study and review by the Ministry, is expected to be helpful in forming a sound basis for the production of teaching materials in conventional primary-school subjects.

The Ministry assured members of the public that the experiment so far has shown that children in the experiment classes are not likely to suffer any disadvantage in future in the use of English and they may in fact do better eventually than pupils using the orthodox method.

They would become completely literate in their mother tongue and have a better grasp of the English language which is taught as a subject by experts from the day the child enters school until he leaves at the end of his primary-school career, the Ministry stated".(8)

The attitude of the Ministry was cautious. The Ministry permitted the experiment but would keep it "under close study and review".

The Federal Military Government set up a Commission on the Creation of more States with a view to creating more States in 1976. The Committee reported in December 1975. Experience shows that each State regards the development of a language or languages indigenous to the State as a mark of the State having come into its own. It may therefore be expected that more Nigerian languages will get a boost after the creation of more States, especially in the States created out of the present multilingual States.

Summing up, there is a statement of the Nigerian language policy in education, which is acceptable to the Federal Ministry and the State Ministries of Education. But practice varies from State to State, within the divisions of a State, between the urban and the rural areas and in fact from school to school. This freedom of practice, summed up in the extract of the press release by the Ministry of Education, Western Nigeria, that "there is absolutely nothing in the country's educational system which prevents a school from using any language for instruction"(9) is a problem in identifying and developing in a concerted manner the media of instruction in Nigeria.

II. THE MOTHER TONGUE IN EDUCATION - PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The use of the mother tongue in education is a practical issue. There is no more favourable means of rapport between the teacher and a child on his first day at school than a common language, which is the child's mother tongue. As the child progresses in his adventure of schooling, the mother tongue is a reassuring means of acquiring concepts and building them into ideas and skills. Again it is a practical issue whether the mother tongue is more scaffolding to be dispensed with when the building is nearly completed or whether it is a stairway, which is a permanent structure of the building and which is in continual use. The answer depends on the quality of the language as a medium of instruction in a curriculum which is widening, generally modern in content, approach and outlook and, in particular, science and technology oriented. It also depends on the quality of the language to develop and match the demand of the curriculum.

The Nigerian languages are rich in traditional settings, but they are generally insufficient to cope with the modern school curriculum. This insufficiency is a major problem. The obvious solution is to examine the quality of the languages to develop with a view to developing them. Examination or research is going on but it is not backed up by enthusiasm, in the face of policy statements which are not backed up by practice. The debate between the altruist and the nationalist does not offer much encouragement for development. The altruist maintains that every mother tongue is worth developing as a medium of instruction. The large number of Nigerian languages makes development along

this principle a prohibitive expenditure. The nationalist, on the other hand, is urging a political decision of adopting one Nigerian language as the national language. "The second conference of the All-Africa Teachers Organization (AATO) has called on the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to explore the possibility of adopting one of the three major African languages - Hausa, Arabic and Swahili - to be taught in all schools in the continent." (10) A popular playwright and scholar, Wole Soyinka, recently advocated the adoption of Swahili as the only African language so that Africa would be identified with Swahili, which in time would become the mother tongue of every African. There are others who see the overwhelming advantages of a world language and urge for Nigeria an early transfer from the mother tongue as a medium of instruction to English, a familiar world language. In the face of these conflicting views, concerted effort on the development of Nigerian languages as adequate media of instruction is not possible. There are efforts, of course, by different bodies and institutions and these will be outlined in the following pages.

It should be noted that Nigeria has five patterns(11) of the use of the mother tongue in education. The first is in the monolingual States - Lagos (Yoruba), Western (Yoruba), East-Central (Igbo) and Kano (Hausa). The problems in these areas are common to all others, which are multilingual to varying extents. The multilingual States have additional problems arising from the small numbers of the users of the languages. The description given in Chapters 3 and 4 of the earlier paper (12) by the writer still represents the present position, more or less, except that Kano now uses Hausa as the medium of instruction in the primary schools sponsored by the State.

(a) The States

First we have the States, which have responsibility for education (concurrently with the Federal Government) in their respective States. The efforts are uneven. In the monolingual States, the language of the State is taught in the primary school, in the secondary school when staff is available, and in teacher-training institutions less regularly. The secondary school efforts are reflected in the entries for the West African School Certificate Examination.(13) The problems are:

(i) lack of qualified teachers of the language, which is due to the

(ii) lack of incentive to learn or specialize in the language. The status of the language is still low. It is a conversational language, widely spoken as such. When serious discussions on modern issues arise, the language is English or a mixture of the Nigerian language and English, the latter taking care of the scientific, technical and foreign words and phrases. While English is usually compulsory in the secondary school, a Nigerian language is not. In the same way, employers demand a minimum achievement in English; there is no such demand in respect of a Nigerian language.

(iii) the development of the language as a medium of instruction is feeble. There is still the erroneous belief that a speaker of a language can use it as a medium of instruction. There is little attempt at grading the words or creating new words to take care of new concepts and new experiences. In many cases, the teachers have neither the background nor the knowledge for using the language effectively in science, mathematics, geography, etc. They themselves acquired the the knowledge in English and have never thought of the desirability to teach the subject in a Nigerian language.

(iv) the few efforts there are, are not co-ordinated. Even in the same school, different words in the Nigerian language are used for the same term, concept or experience.

(v) the low status of the language. Many people, including teachers, see the Nigerian language as ancillary to English. English is the lingua franca, the language of the offices, the shops, the courts (except the customary courts and even there the records are usually in English), of commerce, business, industry and the legislatures. The growth of the language is therefore slow and negligible in the areas of science, technology, commerce, industry and modern settings. Among the Nigerian languages, the status of Hausa is relatively high in the Hausa-speaking areas and it is deliberately promoted. The Emir usually speaks Hausa in his Emirate even when he is fluent in English and his audience is English speaking. Hausa is freely spoken in the offices and the shops, in some of which articles are labelled in Hausa. Road notices in towns are in Hausa. Generally there is some encouragement to learn Hausa.

The Yoruba language is widely spoken in Lagos and the Western States and parts of the Kwara State, but it is taken for granted and no effort is made to promote its status. Igbo is in no better a position.

(vi) the lack of literature aimed at sufficiency of the language as a medium of instruction. Beyond the first stages of learning to read, readers are not graded, topics are in the traditional and literary settings, not in the scientific or technical.

(vii) mass media - radio, television and newspapers - concentrate on literature and traditional settings. Everybody seems shy of scientific and technical themes in the Nigerian language.

(viii) orthography. The Hausa orthography seems to raise no problem. The Yoruba orthography recommended by a specially appointed committee has not received the official approval and so the little differences in the recommendation remain unsolved. Igbo has not reconciled its two forms of orthography. The recommendation for a national orthography has not been accepted in any quarters. Apart from the attempt by Dr. Hans Wolff, each language has its own orthography, which increases the problem for anyone learning two or more Nigerian languages.

(ix) parental negative attitude. Literate and illiterate parents are as one in their concern for the end products. Children on leaving school should have an acceptable achievement in English. In practical terms, they should be able to read, write and communicate in English rather than in a Nigerian language.

(x) the status of English. This is the greatest obstacle to the development of the Nigerian languages. The status of English as the lingua franca and medium of instruction in all secondary and tertiary institutions is so high that no effort is too great in acquiring it. Because English is a world language, there are many methods of teaching it and the techniques and aids are abundant. The teacher of English is well off in resources and is in a far superior position to his colleague who teaches a Nigerian language. In the urban areas of the multilingual States, the urge to make English the medium of instruction from the start is a practical issue. A multilingual State does not give even attention to the development of the language of the State. The tendency is to develop one or two of the languages and neglect the others, which bruises the sensitivity of the minorities.

(xi) transfer from a Nigerian language as the medium of instruction to English. This is a problem which is recognized but to which sufficient attention is not given. There is little preparation for the transfer and many secondary schools spend the first year in remedial work in English.

In multilingual States or communities, the problems are the same as above and are heightened on account of the competing language interests. In order to promote mobility some teachers have to work in areas where they do not understand the children's mother tongue. The easy way out is to fall back on the use of English as the medium of instruction as early as possible.

(b) The National Language Centre

The National Language Centre (6 Obanta Road, Apapa) is a creation of the Federal Ministry of Education. It is concerned with improvement in the quality of instruction and it works on the assumption that the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction is a big factor in promoting the quality of instruction. The Centre proposes "the setting up of a list of minority languages that should be used in the educational programme".(14) We quote comprehensively from a paper by the Centre,(15) identifying some of the problems and making recommendations.

"The programme for development of the chosen languages has to be phased over several years. In the meantime, some more immediate solutions are necessary for the very many language problems that now exist.

1. In some cases, teachers are not trained to teach minority languages, nor to use them as vehicles of instruction.

2. Research done into those languages is scanty and hence the vocabulary available to the teacher is inadequate to cope with new concepts introduced into curriculum changes.

3. Distribution of textbooks, supplementary materials and teaching aids is unsatisfactory. This can be due either to administration or finance, or to a combination of both.

4. Publicity is poor. Teachers are frequently unaware of the existence of teaching materials that would be helpful and of courses they should attend.

5. Enrichment materials and even textbooks have been very limited.

6. There are no incentives either professional or otherwise for teachers using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

7. In some cosmopolitan areas the language of instruction is neither English nor the mother tongue of the community, but rather Pidgin.

8. The present policy is merely a bridge programme.

It would be unfair to leave the impression that some of these problems are not being tackled by the States concerned. This, clearly, is not the case. But the general feeling is that a much more practical programme should be embarked upon

Recommendations

1. That at primary level more emphasis be given to language teaching and learning.

2. That vacation courses in language teaching for those in remote areas be increased substantially. That would mean knowing what languages have been reduced to writing, what primers exist, from where the teaching personnel can be drawn, etc. This information could be obtained through the National Language Centre of the Federal Ministry of Education.

3. That in-term evening and day courses be organized for teachers in urban areas, or those near advanced teachers colleges, institutes of linguistics and universities.

It is advisable that vacation courses should be available for the teachers in rural areas who are more gravely affected by the language problems. The teachers in the towns or near institutions of higher learning should be encouraged to attend in-term courses. Thus the in-service programme will spread more widely.

4. That teachers should, over a period of time, be given an increment on the number of courses attended. This is an incentive for them to want to improve their teaching proficiency.

5. That a comprehensive list of readers and primers of minority languages be compiled and published for the benefit of primary school teachers. The list should indicate where those books can be obtained. It must also be remembered that some States cannot afford to commission the printing and publishing of textbooks and supplementary materials.

6. That all language training programmes throughout the Federation be co-ordinated and advertised. The method of advertisement is a detail that should be carefully planned through a central agency.

7. That funds should be made available for language research projects, writers' workshops and seminars. This will provide the necessary feedback into the educational system.

8. That the mother tongue should be studied throughout the child's educational career. This is a sounder bilingual programme. To develop a deeper knowledge of one's mother tongue has positive effects on attitudinal factors as well as on academic achievement."

This is a step in the right direction. It is hoped that the recommendations will be acceptable to the States and that the Federal Government will give encouragement and financial support. The Centre is still small, no more than a token of intention. It should be expanded and its functions widely publicized.

(c) <u>The Centre for Nigerian Languages, Abdullani Bayero College, Kano</u>

The Centre continues its work in Hausa but attention is concentrated on literature and literary settings. It does not attempt the improvement of Hausa as a sufficient medium of instruction in schools. does the Institute of Linguistics, Zaria, which is concerned with the preservation of the Nigerian languages which are in danger of extinction. The Institute of Education of Ahmadu Bello University is making an effort in developing Hausa as a medium of instruction in a modern setting. A controversial issue is how much should be borrowed from the Arabic, which is a richer language as regards science, mathematics, geography, etc. In Hausa, many words are needed where one Arabic word suffices. Dr. Thomas K. Adeyanju in an article "Relevance in Secondary School Language Curriculums",(16) identifies some shortcomings in the teaching of some mother tongues:

"Some of the shortcomings of the teaching of the mother tongue are as follows:

1. Lack of systematically graded materials for the different levels of the secondary school.

2. Hardly any manuals to guide teachers, the great majority of whom had no training in teaching the mother tongue.

3. Lack of incentive for learning the mother tongue because it is not required in most jobs or institutions.

4. In some languages, indecision with regard to orthography, dialect, graphological units, etc.

5. Negative parental attitude which does not seem to place any educational value on learning the mother tongue.

6. In some languages, scarcity of writings for children or adults which sustain a high level of literacy in the language.

Not all of the above shortcomings apply to all languages. For example, whereas in other parts of the country there are complaints of lack of texts in large numbers or lack of a standard dialect, these are not so acute in the north. The problems here are how to get the schools to stock books in mother tongues in the school libraries and how to get the student to read extensively in Hausa." (17)

(d) The Six-Year Primary Education Project of the University of Ife

The Project was aimed at demonstrating the superiority of the mother tongue (Yoruba in this case) over English (a foreign language) as the medium of instruction throughout a six-year primary education programme. The original research design was:

A. In the experimental classes

(i) the medium of instruction in all subjects except English was Yoruba;

(ii) English was taught by a specialist teacher;

(iii) the curriculum materials in mathematics, science, social studies, Yoruba and English were specially prepared.

B. In the control class

(i) the medium of instruction in all subjects except English was Yoruba in Primary Classes I to III and English in Primary Classes IV to VI;

(ii) the same curriculum materials in mathematics, science, social studies and Yoruba were used except that for Classes IV to VI they were in English;

(iii) English was taught by the class teacher and not necessarily by a specialist in English.

The hypotheses were:

1. Children in experimental classes will be no worse in academic achievement than those in control classes.

2. Knowledge and performance in English language of experimental children will be no worse than those of control children.

3. Children in experimental classes will be better adjusted, more relaxed, more enterprising and more resourceful than children in control classes. (18)

It is not the purpose of this paper to anticipate the results of the research but it is not difficult to visualize that the mother tongue as the medium of instruction should make the children "more relaxed and better adjusted". The real problem is the adequacy of Yoruba as the medium of instruction in mathematics, science and social studies. The problem is seen in its magnitude and complexity when it comes to the preparation of materials and textbooks in Yoruba to express new concepts and experiences. Word equivalents are difficult to find if the concepts and experiences are to be preserved precisely. Take a few examples given at a recent seminar.(19)

(i) Red, pink, orange, brown are all pupa in Yoruba; round spherical, cylindrical are roboto; square, rectangle, trapezium are onigun merin (four-angled or four-cornered); cubical is onigun mefa (six-angled). (Note the confusion that could arise between plane and solid figures.)

(ii) Green is ewe ewe (colour of a leaf; children know that not all leaves are green); acid is majele (poison); electricity is ina nonamona (light that comes out of lightning).

(iii) In a number of cases, there are no equivalents of any kind. You either use the foreign word or you resort to a long imprecise sentence. In mathematics, the difficulty is no less great.

The next problem is the acceptability of the translations to a whole region. The Ife Project is still at the experimental stage and much useful work is being done. Will there be sufficient authority to register the Yoruba equivalents?

The greatest problem is that of transfer. If English or even an African language other than Yoruba is the lingua franca, is it desirable to delay the transfer into that language? The more a language is used, the more fluent or confident in it the user becomes. For the overall interest of the children, what is the best time to transfer? Will the children in the experimental schools have sufficient practice in the use of English to give them confidence in after-school life?

(e) The In-Service Centre, Kano

In co-operation with the Institute of Education of Ahmadu Bello University, much curriculum work and trials are in hand at the In-Service Centre at Kano. The policy is the mother tongue, Hausa, as the medium of instruction throughout the six-year primary education programme. However, the teachers are generally left to their own resources. The materials are in English. The teachers may use Arabic equivalents if they know them or circuitous Hausa phrases or sentences or use the English words. A definite policy is needed as is concerted effort to work out equivalent Hausa or Arabic words to be used.

(f) Nigerian universities

Practically every university in Nigeria does some work on one or more of the Nigerian languages. Details have been given in the paper of which this is an extension. Briefly, concentration is on literature and to a less extent on language. The sufficiency of the languages as media of instruction has not received much attention except by few individual researchers. The reason for the

handicap is that the lecturers themselves have their background in the humanities, usually English, history or French, and not in mathematics, science or geography. The science and mathematics educators are only just beginning to turn attention to language. As a result the teachers of Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, etc., who are trained become fluent in conversational Yoruba or some other Nigerian language and a number of them write poems.

There are individual efforts in practically every university in the country. The writer is concerned with the cultural, including language, difficulties of the Yoruba children in learning science and mathematics. His work in the field of mathematics is "Social Mathematics in a Yoruba Society".(20)

Another effort is a study of the "Problems of Teaching Yoruba in Schools and Colleges in the City of Lagos"(21) by Dr. Afolabi Olabimtan of this university (Department of African Languages and Literatures). We quote verbatim his summary of observations and recommendations:

"The respective attitudes of the education authorities, the parents, the teachers and the students are very relevant to the problems of teaching Yoruba in a cosmopolitan city like Lagos.

Many parents of free primary school pupils do not buy Yoruba books for their children.

Many parents of secondary school students do not want their children to study Yoruba.

Most of the teachers at present are not specialists in the subject, and so do not know what to teach, whilst the few who know do not know how to teach well what they know. They rely on old methods of teaching and cannot see any point in a new Yoruba orthography.

Lagos Education Authorities are not sufficiently alert to their responsibilities in the matter of the teaching of Yoruba. For example:

(a) The Lagos State Ministry of Education and Community Development provides an ambitious Yoruba syllabus for the primary schools without providing inspectors to ensure effective teaching of the subject.

(b) The Ministry provides the syllabus, orders the teaching of the subject, but destroys its own efforts by excluding the subject from the list of final examination subjects.

(c) The Ministry does not show enough interest in the supply of trained teachers for teaching Yoruba in Government-owned schools and colleges, especially its teacher-training colleges.

(d) The Education Department of the Lagos City Council organizes courses to acquaint teachers with modern techniques of teaching some subjects but no such course has been organized for teachers of Yoruba.

The teachers in primary schools are too examination conscious, and they do not bother about Yoruba, which is not offered in First School Leaving Certificate examinations.

In many secondary schools the principals think that Yoruba is a soft option which does not need a specialist for its teaching, nor does it need many periods.

Some students prefer learning French to Yoruba.

Some students take Yoruba culture as an aspect of the traditional religion and because of their preference for other religions like Christianity and Islam, they do not wish to know about Yoruba.

Some students come to the secondary school from English-speaking primary schools and find it difficult to learn Yoruba.

Some students look down on others who learn Yoruba.

Suggested solutions to these problems

(i) The Lagos State Ministry of Education and Community Development should engage a specialist in Yoruba who would ensure effective teaching of Yoruba at all levels, and organize seminars and courses for the Yoruba teachers. Such courses should not be limited to the area of culture but extended to language teaching in all its aspects. As a matter of urgency it is suggested that special courses be organized twice a year, in April and August, for those who were never trained in Yoruba language teaching.

(ii) The First School Leaving Certificate examination should be reviewed to include Yoruba. The examination as it is now whereby pupils take English language, arithmetic and general knowledge (which excludes Yoruba) does not well reflect the policy of the Government, whose educational objectives include the development of the aesthetic taste and appreciation of the child's cultural heritage through music and literature.

(iii) The Ministry should show more interest in the teacher-training colleges by providing qualified Yoruba tutors on their staff.

(iv) The Ministry should also introduce a paper on Yoruba methods parallel to the English methods paper in the Grade II Teachers' Certificate examination.

(v) The Ministry should start its N.C.E. programme to train teachers for primary schools as soon as possible, and make Yoruba one of the important subjects in the curriculum.

(vi) The study of Yoruba, the language of the indigenous people of Lagos, should be made compulsory in all nursery and primary schools within the jurisdiction of the Lagos City Council.

(vii) To disabuse the minds of those parents and students who now think that Yoruba has no economic value and is not demanded by any employer, the State Government should specify credit in Yoruba at the WASC/GCE examination as a minimum educational requirement for appropriate posts. Chief among such posts should be those of field workers in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the co-operative societies, and local tax collectors in the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.

(viii) The Lagos State Government should take an immediate step to persuade the Western State Government to make a final decision on the recommendations of the Yoruba Orthography Committee. At present there is a state of confusion in the way that Yoruba is written down, and a Government decision will put an end to the confusion.

(ix) Teachers of Yoruba should not be given too many teaching periods so that they can pay more attention to individual students, and have adequate time to correct their work.

(x) In order to make the teaching of Yoruba easy for teachers, and the learning easy for students, specialists in Yoruba should be encouraged to write suitable textbooks on language-teaching techniques with particular reference to Yoruba.

(xi) As a development upon the step already taken whereby the Lagos State Government has engaged some of the holders of the University of Lagos Diploma in Yoruba Studies to teach in their schools, the Government should annually sponsor ten or more of its teachers for the one-year Teachers' Diploma Course in Yoruba Studies until the proposed NCE (primary schools) programme begins to yield fruit.

(xii) Efforts should be made to encourage, by bursary and scholarship awards, more students to take Yoruba as a subject in the B.Ed. degree course.

(xiii) Effective Yoruba language courses should be established in any college of education where there is none and be intensified where it already exists to train would-be teachers of Yoruba to acquire such linguistic and communicative competence in the use of the Yoruba language as would make them successful teachers of Yoruba in secondary schools and teacher-training colleges."(22)

In a paper "The Yoruba Language in Education"(23) by A. Ologunde, the problems were raised and the following suggestions made:

(i) an overall language policy;

(ii) adequate syllabus for Yoruba studies;

(iii) developing the language sufficiently to meet the demands of today; need for authoritative orthography, monolingual dictionary, bibliography and grammar;

(iv) "Finally, necessary textbooks should be available qualitatively and quantitatively. Perhaps this requirement is the least satisfactorily met today. Suppose, for example, Yoruba were to be adopted as the medium of instruction for all primary-school education. Where are the textbooks written in Yoruba on relevant materials in history, geography, mathematics, and elementary general science, to name a few? This may be the greatest single uphill task to be faced by the Ife University project".(24)

(g) International organizations

(i) The International Commission on Mathematical Instruction (ICMI)

The International Commission on Mathematical Instruction (ICMI) put up its Second International Congress on Mathematical Education (ICME) at Exeter University in September 1972. One of the recommendations was that "fundamental research should be undertaken on the relation between the learning of basic mathematical structures and the language through which they are learnt". Consequently, ICMI, with the co-operation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) and the Centre for Educational Development Overseas (CEDO), organized a symposium on the Interactions between Linguistics and Mathematical Education, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1 to 11 September 1974. The report (25) (Unesco ED-74/CONF.808) contains some of the problems connected with the mother tongue as the medium of instruction and with the transfer to another language as the medium of instruction. By widening the scope of the theme, we find that we are back with the same questions of the status of the mother tongue and the registers of the subjects - science, mathematics and social studies. The questions raised with transfer are:

1. Timing and duration.

2. Special preparation.

3. Continuity of conceptual growth.

4. Mismatch between the child's experience and that assumed by teaching materials in the second language,

5. Difficulties of communication in the new medium.

(ii) The Commonwealth Association of Science and Mathematics Educators (CASME)

The Commonwealth Association of Science and Mathematics Educators (CASME) followed up the Nairobi Workshop by organizing in Accra, Ghana, a seminar on Languages and the Teaching of Science and Mathematics with Special Reference to Africa, from 27 to 31 October 1975. The seminar explored the areas of difficulty identified as:

1. Vocabulary of the medium of instruction as to its adequacy for the curriculum.

2. Syntax of the medium of instruction as to conflicts with a world language of instruction.

3. Transfer from one medium (usually the mother tongue) to another, say English.

The participants saw that the greatest problem was the vocabulary of the African languages which did not have words for the scientific and mathematical concepts, terms and experiences. The next problem was of transfer and the questions raised were similar to those of the Nairobi Workshop. Syntax did not appear a major problem but it was worth further examination by teams of linguists working with science and mathematics educators.

The relevance of these international efforts is that most of the African countries represented use an African language as the medium of instruction for a part or all of the primary education programme. The second is that the problems are identified and an exchange of ideas and information takes place in a non-political, professional atmosphere. The report then carries the message around for action by the communities and the educators concerned.

III SUMMARY - PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) Policy and practice

The national policy is the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the lower classes of the primary school. Each State adopts the policy with modifications dictated by its own circumstances. In the monolingual States, the mother tongue is used in Classes I, II and III of a six-year primary education programme and English in the last three classes. There are exceptions, such as Kano in which Hausa is the medium throughout the six classes and the Ife project area in which Yoruba is the medium of instruction throughout the six-year programme. In the multilingual areas, there is a wide variation ranging from nought to two years of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, followed by English as the medium.

The problem is that the languages are not adequately developed as media of instruction and the teachers are not trained to use the languages as such. As a result, practice varies widely from school to school and even within the same school. Moreover, there is no authority or machinery to compel conformity to the policy. The leaving of the practice of the policy to the discretion of the teachers and the absence of check or even interest by the inspectors conceal the

difficulties of the languages as media of instruction. Solutions are either not attempted or as in the universities they are attempted in an ad hoc manner and in isolation. In the Grade II teacher-training colleges where the primary school teachers are trained, there is little emphasis on the language of instruction. Even when a Nigerian language is in the college curriculum, attention to its aspect as a medium of instruction is usually neglected.

To the writer, the language practice in Nigeria indicates a policy of English and a major Nigerian language, that is, one of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba in general. In the multilingual areas, a child should start with his mother tongue, move to a major Nigerian language and lastly to English. In time, the major Nigerian language should become a mother tongue of the people in the locality. Attempts should therefore be made by the States to pursue the national policy. For example, there should be inspectors who are experts in one language or another, who should liaise with specialist teachers to organize courses, draw syllabuses and write textbooks and to visit teachers in the schools. The inspectors should ensure uniformity of practice and discourage the slipshod habit of using dialects or a Nigerian language interspersed with English words which have equivalents in the language.

(ii) Status

Relative to that of English, the status of a Nigerian language is low. Although there are many people who do not speak or understand English (more than half the population), English is highly rated. It is the lingua franca, one of the means of national unity. In education, the status of a Nigerian language is low. Only four of the languages (Efik, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) are studied at the secondary-school level. Those who study one or another of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba at the tertiary level are extremely few. Efik is not yet a university subject.

There is some deliberate attempt to promote one or another of the major Nigerian languages, as may be seen in the increased number of entries at the West African School Certificate examination.(26) The problem of the low status should not be considered in isolation. With a realistic language policy and the development of the language towards sufficiency and effectiveness, the status should rise.

(iii) Vocabulary

This problem is easiest to identify in a lesson in science, mathematics, civics or geography. There are the concepts and the technical terms for which there are no equivalents or for which the equivalents are imprecise, inadequate and sometimes completely misleading. The Yoruba word majele (a deadly poison) for the word acid does not define an acid. It is an example of a misleading equivalent. So are the words suggested for electricity, cylinder, green, etc.

The solution is hard work by a team of science and mathematics educators and linguists working together to get the equivalents or to decide on which words should be admitted unchanged into the Nigerian language. An attempt was made in 1953 by the Western Region of Nigeria, which set up a Conference on Yoruba Scientific Terminology,(28) comprising scientists, mathematicians, Yoruba specialists and Dr. Hans Wolff, Unesco linguistics adviser. The status of the English language in education was too high to make the exercise worth while, especially as science and mathematics had not entered into the primary-school curriculum. The time is ripe for another attempt at the State level to enrich the vocabulary of the major Nigerian languages both for raising the quality of education in the primary school and the quality of the languages in society. There are now Nigerian linguists and more educators and scholars who speak the languages and are scientists, mathematicians or geographers.

(iv) Materials

The mother tongue as a medium of instruction implies materials prepared in the mother tongue language. Pupils' readers and textbooks on the Nigerian language and other subjects of the curriculum, tapes, videotapes, practice books are essential. Even in the major Nigerian languages, publishers are very deliberate as to what they publish. In the minor languages, readers and books need to be subsidized. As a result, there are either no books or few and inadequate books. Teachers and pupils are eager to get on to books in English, of which there is a good supply.

The solution adopted by the Ife project is mimeographed readers and texts, neatly bound into books. This, of course, is a great expedient and poor substitute for attractive colourful books, illustrated with beautiful pictures. For the minor languages, it may be the only realistic solution.

The major languages have a better chance. There are big markets to justify published readers, but that is about all. Books for general reading are few and textbooks on other subjects of the curriculum hardly exist. There are either no authors or the publishers are too cautious.

(v) Transfer

The transfer from the mother tongue as a medium of instruction to a second language (Nigerian or English) is a problem which does not receive much attention. Some of the questions which arise are the best time for the transfer, the preparation for the transfer, the manner of the transfer. In the more usual case of transfer to English, the better teachers have a transitional period, usually in the Primary Class III, when they use the mother tongue as the medium in certain subjects and English as the medium in others. In many Yoruba schools, that is the practice throughout the classes. The teacher resorts to the Yoruba language when English as the medium appears not to achieve the objective of the lesson.

The solution to the problem of transfer seems to be the adoption of the practice of some teachers of the three periods of (a) the mother tongue, (b) the transition and (c) English. The teacher is usually the same person and he should therefore know what preparation is necessary and the best time to make the gradual change within the range allowed by the language policy.

(vi) Teacher training

The problem of no training or poor training of the teacher in the mother tongue and the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction is a key problem. It is still erroneously held that a teacher who is a speaker of a language can teach the language and use it as a medium of instruction.

There are signs of a change of attitude. More teacher-training colleges are teaching one major Nigerian language or another, the universities are intensifying the Nigerian language programmes and new curricula are emerging. The States need to pay attention to this aspect of teacher training and to appoint inspectors to do the follow up in schools.

(vii) Universal Primary Education (UPE)

Seven languages have been selected as the Nigerian languages to be taught in the UPE curriculum and presumably within the policy as media of instruction. Contracts have been awarded for the production of readers in the seven languages (Edo, Efik, Fulfulde, Hausa, Igbo, Kanuri and Yoruba). The problem of teacher training and the learning of one of these languages should be tackled seriously.

The Federal Government is keen on promoting the physical mobility of teachers at all levels. It is obvious that the language difficulty will inhibit mobility at the primary-school level. This is not necessarily a bad thing. The teachers of young children should know the language as well as the culture and the environment of the children.

(viii) Research

There is room for research into the major Nigerian languages at least for their sufficiency as media of instruction, into the problem of the multiplicity of languages as to which should be developed and into the problem of transfer. The development of the languages spoken by few people for the sake of preserving the languages is a retrograde step. Research should be made towards finding a way of narrowing down the number of the Nigerian languages with a view to better and more effective communication among the ethnic groups. In particular, research could throw light on the desirability to make a Nigerian language the lingua franca.

(ix) Publications and information

It is a problem that there is not much information on the language development that is attempted by different bodies and institutions in the same country and outside it. Very little is published in the languages and even this is not read by many. For a language to develop, it needs to be used in the various contexts - scientific, technical, literary, social, etc. The Nigerian languages suffer from the lack of publications in the languages and of information as to their development. These factors perpetuate the low status of the languages.

The solution is, of course, more publications and information. Deliberate effort including subsidy by the Governments is needed to make any improvement in the present position.

IV CONCLUDING REMARKS

The importance of the mother tongue in the education of children in their early years is not in doubt. The problems of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction have been discussed. These problems could be narrowed down to (i) policy, (ii) sufficiency of the language as a medium of instruction and (iii) teacher training. They are not insurmountable problems if all concerned - the Governments, educators, teachers, the general public, commercial and industrial concerns - accept the challenge in the interest of education.

It should be accepted that now and for some time to come, an educated Nigerian has to be bilingual in a Nigerian language and a world language, obviously English. The educator should therefore aim at fluency and sufficiency in both languages. Even if a Nigerian language becomes the lingua franca, English will still be an essential equipment of the scholar and the educated Nigerian. For a good start, the child learns in his mother tongue, one or another of the Nigerian languages, and then gradually moves into English as the medium of instruction. This is the way to ensure equal access of every Nigerian child to education.

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26. Appendix II.

27. Appendix III.

APPENDIX I

NIGERIAN POPULATION BY NATIONALITY AND ETHNIC GROUP

1963 CENSUS

	Nationality and ethnic group	Population
1.	Hausa	11,652,745
2.	Yoruba	11,320,509
3.	Ibo	9,246,388
4.	Fulani	4,784,366
5.	Kanuri	2,259,091
6.	Ibibio	2,006,489
7.	Tiv	1,393,649
8.	Ijaw	1,088,885
9.	Edo	954,970
10.	Annang	675,004
11.	Nupe	656,296
12.	Urhobo	639,251
13.	Ugaka	581,551
14.	Idoma	485,562
15.	Igbirra	425,783
16.	Gwari	378,168
17.	Ekoi	344,514
18.	Munuye	294,208
19.	Alago	249,537
20.	Ogoni	202,567
21.	Isoko	200,357
22.	Higgi	176,969
23.	Bura	171,875
24.	Efik	166,297
25.	Chamba	162,330
26.	Shau-Arabashuwa	155,531
27.	Kaje	152,264
28.	Jari	146,983
29.	Kambari	145,610
30.	Eggon	143,028
31.	Kobchi	141,224
32.	Angas	138,224
33.	Karekare	128,802
34.	Birom	118,736
35.	Yergam	116,235
	Other Nigerians	3,654,165
	Other Africans	54,504
	Non-Africans	46,957
	Unspecified	10,431
	Total	55,670,055

APPENDIX II

ENTRIES FOR THE WEST AFRICAN SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION(1)

		November 1970	May 1974
1.	Efik	477	575
2.	Hausa	737	2,652
3.	Igbo	6,571	9,916
4.	Yoruba	11,955	15,835
5.	Arabic	61	130
6.	Latin	322	104
7.	French	3,891	3,334
8.	English	58,000	63,720

(1) Supplied by the West African Examinations Council

APPENDIX III

No. M.E.W. 161/49

Adult Education Office,
New Court Road,
Ibadan.

5 September 1953.

Dr. V.A. Oyemuga, University College, Ibadan.

Mr. J.O. Oyelese, University College, Ibadan.

Mr. D.F. Ojo, University College, Ibadan.

Dr. S.D. Onabamiro, University College, Ibadan.

Mr. H.M.B. Somade, c/o Director of Marketing & Experts, Lagos.

Secretary to the Minister of Education, Ibadan.

Mr. Dotun Oyewole, Grammar School, Abeokuta.

Mr. Femi Oyewole, Grammar School, Abeokuta.

Mr. C.O. Taiwo, Edo College, Benin City.

Mr. S.A. Babalola, Igbobi College, Yaba.

Conference on Yoruba Scientific Terminology,
at 4.30 p.m. on 26 September 1953

I direct your attention to paragraph 4 of the minutes of the First Meeting of the Conference on Scientific Terminology, a copy of which was despatched to you under complimentary slip on 18 June 1953.

2. Dr. Hans Wolf, Linguistic Adviser, Unesco, will be present too.

(signed) J.S. Ogunlesi
(Convener)

JSO/PAO